

to become an exhibitor. The fact that Mr. Hausburg is connected with the movement will no doubt influence intending exhibitors who otherwise may have had some doubts as to the safety of their collections. The Hon. Secretary's address is 13 Walbrook, London, E.C.

Some Dry Sides of Philately. There is no gainsaying that philately has terribly dry surroundings for the non-collector. Did anyone ever write a humorous philatelic story or poem whose humour appealed to the general reader? We have not read any of that kind so far; and if the story did contain humour it was connected with non-philatelic subjects. It has been our lot on two occasions to see the reverse of the humorous side of philately. One was when a husband complained of the breaking up of a former happy home through the craze of his wife for stamps, she gradually neglecting her household duties and ties for too great an attention to philately. The other was where a poor woman had to pay very dearly for her son's dishonesty, brought about also by his craze for collecting stamps. Although such occasions are rare, they show that philately has its dark as well as its bright sides. However, to revert again to the dry side of philately, we would ask collectors if they know of any magazine that has less interest for the general reader than a philatelic publication. Occasional stories have appeared and do appear in American stamp journals, but were such offered to editors of any other magazine the chances are that in 999 cases out of 1,000 they would be either thrown in the waste-paper basket or returned to the author with freezing politeness. Some may argue that all magazines devoted to technical subjects are as equally dry reading as stamp journals. We differ from this opinion because even in the driest of technical subjects some interest is awakened. The problem how to make stamp journals interesting to the general reader is, we confess, a very difficult one to solve. The only way to awaken the outsiders' interest in a stamp is to give full details of the method of drawing, engraving, and printing the design, and if the last portrays a head of a ruler, past or present, to give some interesting facts respecting the life of the individual. We know it is a hard matter to convince an earnest and advanced collector that what he thinks delightful reading about stamps is an almost dead language to the non-collector. Thus the enthusiastic collector is unconscious of the fact that whilst pitying the outsider for his lack of interest in philately, the outsider often thinks the collector a person that should not be left to roam about by himself.

Punctured Official Stamps.

TO THE EDITOR, AUSTRALIAN PHILATELIST.

Sir, — In the *London Philatelist* for May last, the editor launches out into a diatribe anent the "Hybrid issues and postal abortions which now, generally speaking, do duty as the postage stamps of Australia," and while severely commenting upon the abnormal size, mean and colourless

designs, and large number of minor variations to be found in the current South Australian series, metaphorically lifts up his hands in horror at the added enormity of a set of all values up to 5s. "punctured for official use with the letters S.A." He then quotes your opinion that punctured O.S. stamps stand on the same plane as those with the O.S. surcharged, and remarks that *Mekeel's Weekly* holds a somewhat similar opinion.

The rest of this editorial is well worth quoting in full, as it contains some rather remarkable arguments and assertions.

"Our contemporaries," he says, "overlook one or two very important features. It may be argued that one woman is as good as another, but none the less is the opposite sex largely guided by appearances, and generally fails to see the advantage of annexing a mutilated or unprepossessing specimen of the opposite gender. So with these two classes of official stamps. They may have equal value, i.e. both possessing an official notification on the stamp that they are not available for ordinary postage, but in one case their appearance is not materially damaged by the surcharge, while their philatelic interest is frequently heightened in the case of varieties; in the other case the stamp is badly mutilated, and portions of the design being cut away, the stamp is greatly disfigured, and, in fact, damaged. To any real philatelist this must be a strongly deterring feature. A second and even more important feature is the practical impossibility of knowing whether a 'punctured surcharge' is genuine or not. The case of the official West Australian stamps with the round holes (formerly believed to be convict stamps!) is to the point. Their collection to-day is confined to but very few, nor would any collector appraise any stamp thus punctured at the same price as the like specimen without the puncture. This must evidently be the case with punctured surcharges, as no one would be able to decide whether they were official or officious. For these cogent reasons we believe that the class of philatelists who affect official stamps will very generally confine their collections to those specimens that were surcharged only."

The writer of this article starts out with an unfortunate example! If a member of the sterner sex were collecting specimens of the softer sex in a similar way to postage stamps he would naturally require an example of each variety. He would not necessarily be guided by appearances,—in fact, would probably regard some of his most unprepossessing copies, if difficult to obtain, with greater interest than many of the most beautiful, even as a true philatelist would place one of the ugly circular British Guianas higher in his esteem than the most attractive of the Seebeck rubbish! It is strange that a philatelist of such attainments as the editor of the premier London journal should be led into the obvious error of assuming that it is a matter of choice whether the collector should accept a "mutilated" punctured stamp or a surcharged stamp that is not mutilated. The puncture and the surcharge are totally different things, applied to, in most cases, entirely different stamps. The question really is: are the punctured stamps collectable as varieties? Arguing from no less an authority than Stanley Gibbons' catalogue, they are. That standard

publication lists and prices 14 varieties of Luxembourg stamps, perforated with the word "OFFICIEL." Similarly, the same catalogue lists some sixty varieties of Tunisian "unpaid letter" stamps, being the ordinary postage stamps with the letter T perforated through the centre. This list is somewhat unduly swollen by the inclusion of varieties with inverted acupuncture. (Note: This word is patented as to its application to the perforated officials!). To my mind, these two examples taken from the leading catalogue are sufficient to establish the collectability of the Australian officially perforated stamps. That the publishers have not yet included the latter stamps in their list is perhaps due to some little uncertainty as to their origin and status, but the next issue should contain a full list—or else the Luxembourgs and Tunisians should be omitted.

As to the argument that the perforated stamps are "damaged" by having portions of the design cut away, it is a mere matter of opinion as to which is most damaged, a stamp with a large part of its design "blacked out" like a censored article in a Russian journal, or one with a smaller proportion of its design punched out. To say that a surcharged stamp is not mutilated, and therefore collectable, while a punctured stamp is mutilated, and therefore not collectable, would be the height of absurdity. If the puncture is intended to serve, and does actually serve the same purpose as the surcharge, then the punctured stamp is equally collectable.

With regard to the final illustration—that of the punched Western Australian stamps, the editor is sadly at variance with our other authority. Stanley Gibbons say that these were used for official correspondence from 1854 to 1885, and offer to sell any varieties in stock at the same price as similar stamps without the hole. So much for the question of relative values of whole and hole specimens.

After all, the question to be definitely decided is, in my opinion, are these punctured stamps in any way different from those perforated with the initials of any private firm who chooses to apply to the Postmaster-General for stamps in that condition? So far as the stamps perforated O.S. only, used in New South Wales, South and Western Australia, are concerned, I unhesitatingly say that they are different, inasmuch as they are issued for use by officers of the Commonwealth. Those perforated O.S., N.S.W., are merely issued in exchange for payment made by the State of New South Wales, and are thus marked by the Commonwealth at the request of its customer, the State, which in this respect stands in exactly the same position as a private firm. Similarly, the stamps purchased from the Commonwealth by the Government Railway Commissioners of New South Wales are initialled G.R. at the request of the Commissioners, who also are in the position of private individuals so far as the Commonwealth is concerned.

In the case of Tasmania, the T perforation is a State mark, placed on the stamps supplied to its own employees by a State which has purchased such stamps from the Government of the Commonwealth, which controls the postal affairs of Tasmania equally with those of the other five States.

In the case of Victoria, matters are rather confusing. There the

letters O.S. only are perforated on the stamps used by both Commonwealth and State, and there is no means of distinguishing the one from the other, except by collecting specimens on entire covers bearing the name of the Commonwealth. This, I admit, would be a rather cumbrous method, and, on the whole, not one to be recommended.

Of course, I am fully aware that no amount of argument will suffice to convert some collectors to my views, be they collectors of punctures or not, so I will leave the matter where it is at present, only trusting that I have not taken up too much of your space.

A. F. BASSET HULL.

Brevities.

Our Efficient Post Office.

An envelope containing a business letter was recently sent from Hong Kong to London for the famous juggler Ching Ling Foo. The address was, however, printed in Chinese, and to ninety-nine persons in a hundred the hieroglyphics would appear hopelessly undecipherable. Somebody, however, has a knowledge of the Celestial language at the G.P.O., for without any delay in transit the letter duly reached its destination. This was the Empire Theatre, where Ching Ling Foo was recently performing. Just now the juggler is in the south of Spain, and the letter was sent on to him carefully redirected, but not in Chinese, for fear the Spanish postal officials do not possess the polyglot powers of St. Martin's-le-Grand.—G.S.W.

Royal Collectors.

Le Journal des Philatelistes states that, in accordance with a desire expressed by H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, whilst on a visit to Paris, the President of the French Republic has forwarded to H.R.H. two albums containing a complete set of the stamps issued from 1849 to date for France and her colonies.

Last year, a similar series was forwarded to the Mikado per medium of the Japanese Ambassador.

These presentations tend to prove that collections of stamps are entering more and more into the category of those little presents, destined to cement the friendship between Royalty.

Sweden's Jubilee.

It is exactly 50 years since Sweden issued postage stamps for the first time. It is the intention of the Philatelic Society of Sweden, of which Prince Gustaf Adolf is an honorary member, to celebrate the event, not by endeavoring to procure a commemorative issue, but by publishing a work on the stamps of Sweden with the sanction and under the auspices of the Government.